

# **WORK, WORKERS AND THEIR WORKPLACES (W&S 700)**

**Winter 2018, KTH 732**

**Class Mondays 11:30-2:30**

**Office hours: Mondays 2:30-3:30**

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Classes start: Monday January 8

Classes end: Monday April 9

“Students should be taken to the edge of the precipice beyond which knowledge does not exist.”

H.A. Innis

## **OBJECTIVES**

The objective is to examine the theory, history and practice of work. The course is divided into three sections. Sections One and Two provide an overview of theories of work and how they help us understand different forms of work organization. In Section Three explores what work might look like in the future.

There will be a number of themes running through the course including what is the relationship between work and employment; whether there is a long-term trend to less skilled work and less secure employment; and what is the relationship between how we organize work and employment and the robustness of our economy.

## **TEXTS**

The following texts and e-books will be used extensively during the course. Required readings, other than the texts, are available at Mills Library on short-term reserve or are available on-line through the library. A few items are posted at the Avenue to Learn site for the course.

Martin Ford. 2015. *The Rise of the Robots: Technology and the Threat of a Jobless Future*, (New York, Basic Books).

Kendra Coulter. 2014. *Revolutionizing Retail*, (New York, Palgrave Macmillan).

Erin Hatton. 2011. *The Temp Economy*, (Philadelphia, Temple University Press).

## **TEXTS AVAILABLE AS E-BOOKS IN THE LIBRARY**

Simon Head. 2014. *Mindless: Why Smarter Machines are Making Dumber Humans*, (New York, Basic Books). (Available as an E-book at the Library)

Guy Standing. 2011. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, (New York, Bloomsbury). (Available as an E-book at the Library)

David Weil. 2014. *The Fissured Workplace: Why Work Became So Bad for So Many and What Can Be Done To Improve It*, (Cambridge. Harvard University Press) (Available as an E-book at the Library).

## **BACKGROUND READING**

Although not a required text for the course, students with a limited background on work might find the following survey text useful.

Paul Thompson. *The Nature of Work: An Introduction to Debates on the Labour Process* 2 ed., (Macmillan, London, 1989).

## **SECONDARY TEXTS**

Sharon Beder. *Selling the Work Ethic: From Puritan Pulpit to Corporate PR*, (Zed Books, London & New York, 2000).

Harry Braverman. *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1974).

Erik Brynjolfsson & Andrew McAfee. 2014. *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress, and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies*, (New York, W.W.Norton).

Joanne B. Ciulla. *The Working Life: The Promise and Betrayal of Modern Work*, (Three Rivers Press, New York, 2000).

Kevin Doogan. 2009. *New Capitalism: The Transformation of Work*, (Cambridge, Polity Press).

Jill Andresky Fraser. *White Collar Sweat-Shop: The Deterioration of Work and Its Rewards in Corporate America*, (New York, Norton, 2001).

Andre Gorz. *Reclaiming Work: Beyond the Wage-based Society*, (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2005).

Steven Greenhouse. *The Big Squeeze: Tough Times for the American Worker*, (Anchor Books, New York, 2009).

Francis Green. *Demanding Work: The Paradox of Job Quality in the Affluent Economy*, (Princeton University Press, 2006).

Arne Kalleberg. 2011. *Good Jobs: Bad Jobs*, (New York, Russel Sage Foundation).

Robert Karasek. *Healthy Work: Stress, Productivity, and the Reconstruction of Working Life*, (Basic Books, 1990).

Caitlin Kelly. *Malled: An Unintentional Career in Retail*, (Penguin, New York, 2011).

Lawrence Mishel et.al.. 2012. *The State of Working America*; 12<sup>th</sup> edition. (Ithaca, ILR Press).

Andrew Ross. 2003. *No-Collar: The Humane Workplace and its Hidden Costs*, (New York, Basic Books).

Shoshana Zuboff. *In the Age of the Smart Machine*, (New York, 1988).

## **COURSE EVALUATION**

The course is based on a seminar format and participation is emphasized. The goal is to create a co-operative learning environment where students learn from each other. It is expected that everyone will do all of the readings for each class and should expect to be asked to reflect on any of the readings. Each session is structured around discussion of assigned readings and in some cases specific questions linked to these readings.

- Class participation 30% (Based on class presentations and overall class participation)
- Essay proposal 10%
- Essay 60%

## **CLASS PARTICIPATION AND STUDENT PRESENTATIONS (30%)**

Quality of participation counts a lot more than quantity of participation. Students will be assessed based on their participation in discussions and on a series of assignments over the course of the term. While what you know is important, however even more important is what you contribute to the collective learning project.

1) Starting in week two, students will submit, **at the start of class**, a two page (double spaced 12 pitch) summary of each week's readings that outlines the key things you learned from the readings. The summary should focus on the big questions posed and answered by the readings. The summary should focus on either the (A) part or (B) part readings from each week. Students will be expected to submit summaries from 7 of the 11 weeks of readings.

2) Starting in week three, students will be assigned responsibility for opening the discussion of some or all of the readings each week. We will allocate these responsibilities in week two of the course. For each section of the course we will start with the following four questions. A different student will be assigned to open the discussion on each of the four questions.

- 1) Here is what I did not understand in this week's readings
- 2) Here is what I found really interesting.
- 3) Here is what I learned this week that has helped me understand what we have been discussing in class.
- 4) Here are questions that this week's readings raise for me.

This will be followed by an open discussion of the readings.

## **ESSAY (Proposal 10% and essay 60%)**

Students will prepare a 15-20 page essay (12 pitch double spaced) on a topic of their choice related to the course material. A two page written essay proposal (plus bibliography) must be submitted by February 26. The proposal should include a well-defined thesis statement and what you hope to learn. It should include a summary of at least one key reading related to the thesis and a preliminary bibliography for

further reading. After reading the proposal I should have a good idea of what you want to research and what you hope to learn. Students are advised to meet with me to discuss their proposal before submitting it. The proposal will be worth 10% of the final grade.

The final essay will be worth 60% of the grade. It is expected that the essay will include relevant assigned readings plus other secondary material. The essay is due the last scheduled class of term. Extensions will be granted only under extraordinary conditions.

If you need help with writing, the University subscribes to an online grammar checker. Try it at:  
<http://www.grammarly.com/>

## SECTION ONE: Trends and the meaning of work in contemporary societies

### **WEEK 1: Introduction to Work: Is too much work and mindless work our destiny?**

**\*\*\* Please come to class prepared to discuss the future of work and the readings in part B of week one \*\*\*\*\***

**A) Lecture:** Course introduction: Are we trapped in an over-work culture?

Video: The End Men: Work <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=knmFXn18T6w>

**B) Group discussion:** What is the future of work?

Video: Martin Ford on the end of Work  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=swB7Ivct8d8>

Simon Head. 2014. *Mindless*: 1-13. (Available as an E-book at the Library)

James Livingston, *No More Work*: 1-12. (Available on avenue to learn)

Martin Ford, *The Rise of the Robots*: 1-27.

### **WEEK 2: Work and Society**

**A) Lecture:** The social construction of "work"

Sharon Beder, *Selling the Work Ethic: From Puritan Pulpit to Corporate PR*, (Zed Books, London, 2000): 1-5 & 261-72.

<http://www.uow.edu.au/~sharonb/work%20extracts/Intro.pdf>

<http://www.uow.edu.au/~sharonb/work%20extracts/conclusion.pdf>

#### **Optional Readings**

Joanne B. Ciulla. 2000. *The Working Life: The Promise and Betrayal of Modern Work*, (Three Rivers Press, New York).

Sharon Beder. 2000. *Selling the Work Ethic: From Puritan Pulpit to Corporate PR*, (Zed Books, London & New York).

**B) Group Discussion:** Why do we work and do we all work for the same reasons? Is there a gender dimension to the meaning of work in a capitalist society?

Zygmunt Bauman. 2005. *Work, Consumerism and the New Poor* (2nd edition), chapter 1, "The meaning of work: Producing the work ethic", (Open University Press, Maidenhead) pp. 5-22. (E-book)

Jennifer Johnson. 2002. *Getting By on the Minimum: The Lives of Working-Class Women*, chapter 5 “What Work Means”, (Routledge, New York) pp. 89-120. (available at Mills Library on short-term reserve.)

## **SECTION TWO: Theoretical foundation for understanding work**

### **WEEK 3: Alienation and Labour Process Theory**

**A) Group discussion:** What is alienation? Can alienating work be satisfying work?

James W. Rinehart. 1987. *The Tyranny of Work: Alienation and the Labour Process*, 2nd ed., (Toronto): 13-24. (Available on avenue to learn)

Andrew Ross. 2003. *No-Collar: The Humane Workplace and its Hidden Costs*, (Basic Books, New York): 1-20. (Available on avenue to learn)

Clive Trusson and Frankie Woods. 2017. “An end to the job as we know it’: how an IT professional has experienced the uncertainty of IT outsourcing.” (*Work, employment and society*, Vol. 31(3): 542–552).

**B) Group discussion:** Labour Process Theory: What was Braverman's contribution? What are its limits? Why is it still important?

Vicki Smith. 1994. “Braverman's legacy.” (*Work and Occupations*, Vol. 21 (4): 403-21).

David A. Spencer. 2000. “Braverman and the Contribution of Labour Process Analysis to the Critique of Capitalist Production – Twenty-Five Years On”, (*Work, Employment & Society*, Vol. 14 (2): 223–243).

Students who are not familiar with Braverman's thesis might want to spend some time with Braverman's classic work on the issue, Harry Braverman. 1974, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*, (Monthly Review Press, New York). In particular look at pp. 1-58.  
[https://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0ahUKEwj21crGitPXAhXJ4IMKHRMyBE0QFgg0MAE&url=https%3A%2F%2Faringlabor.files.wordpress.com%2F2010%2F11%2F8755-labor\\_and\\_monopoly\\_capitalism.pdf&usq=AOvVaw1lykNIp0yFqq9NjS1uflsr](https://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=2&ved=0ahUKEwj21crGitPXAhXJ4IMKHRMyBE0QFgg0MAE&url=https%3A%2F%2Faringlabor.files.wordpress.com%2F2010%2F11%2F8755-labor_and_monopoly_capitalism.pdf&usq=AOvVaw1lykNIp0yFqq9NjS1uflsr)

### **WEEK 4: Factory Work, Fordism and Financialization**

**A) Group discussion:** How did Ford revolutionize work in factories and how has it changed under lean production?

Wayne Lewchuk, 1987. American technology and the British vehicle industry, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge) pp. 33-65. (Available on avenue to learn)

M. Kenney & R. Florida. 1993. *Beyond Mass Production: The Japanese System and its Transfer to the US*, chapter 2, “Beyond Fordism”, (Oxford University Press, Oxford,) pp. 23-49. (Available on avenue to learn)

G. Sewell & B. Wilkinson. 1992. "Someone to Watch Over Me: Surveillance Discipline and the Just in Time Labour Process" (*Sociology*, Vol. 26 (2): 271-90).

**B) Group discussion:** What is the changing role of labour in the transition from Fordism to Financialization

Matt Vidal. 2013. "Postfordism as a dysfunctional accumulation regime: a comparative analysis of the USA, the UK and Germany", (*Work, employment and society*, Vol. 27(3): 451–471).

Jean Cushen and Paul Thompson. 2016. "Financialization and value: why labour and the labour process still matter." (*Work, employment and society*, Vol. 30(2): 352–365).

## **WEEK 5: Emotional Labour and Service Work**

**A) Group discussion:** What is emotional labour and how does it affect how we think about work?

Paul Brook. 2009. "The Alienated Heart: Hochschild's 'emotional labour' thesis and the anticapitalists politics of alienation", (*Capital and Class*, Vol. 33 (2): 7-30).

Sharon C. Bolton and Carol Boyd. 2003. "Trolley dolly or skilled emotion manager? Moving on from Hochschild's Managed Heart", (*Work Employment and Society*, Volume 17(2): 289-308).

Paul Brook. 2009. "In critical defence of 'emotional labour': refuting Bolton's critique of Hochschild's concept", (*Work Employment and Society*, Vol. 23(3): 531-48).

Sharon C. Bolton. 2009. Getting to the heart of the emotional labour process: a reply to Brook, (*Work Employment and Society*, Vol. 23(3): 549–560).

**B) Group discussion:** How does service work differ from factory work?

Marek Korczynski. 2013. "The customer in the sociology of work: different ways of going beyond the management–worker dyad", (*Work, employment and society* 27(6): NP1-NP7).

Jacques Bélanger & Paul Edwards. 2013. "The nature of front-line service work: distinctive features and continuity in the employment relationship", (*Work, employment and society*, Vol. 27(3): 433–450).

Coulter. 2014. *Revolutionizing Retail*: 19-53.

## **WEEK 6: Control beyond the workplace**

**A) Group discussion:** What is a fissured workplace and how has it affected workers?

Martin Ford, *Rise of the Robots*: 29-61.

David Weil, *The Fissured Workplace: Why Work Became So Bad for So Many and What Can be Done to Improve It*. (Cambridge, 2014): 7-42. (Available on avenue to learn) (Available as an E-book at the Library)

**B) Group discussion:** How has temp work been normalized and is it a necessary feature of modern economies?

Hatton. 2011. *The Temp Economy*: 1-141.

### **SECTION Three: Good Jobs/Bad Jobs and the Modern Workplace**

#### **WEEK 7: Gender and Work**

**A) Group discussion:** The male breadwinner model in transition: What is it? How is it changing? How are men and women adapting?

Rosemary Crompton. 2006. *Employment and the Family*, (Cambridge): 31-38. (Available as an E-book at the Library)

Heidi Gottfried. 2000. "Compromising positions: emergent neo-Fordism and embedded gender contracts", (*British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. No. 51 (2): 235–259).

Darren Nixon. 2009. "‘I Can’t Put a Smiley Face On’: Working-Class Masculinity, Emotional Labour and Service Work in the ‘New Economy’", (*Gender, Work and Organization*, Vol. 16 (3): 300-22).

Nickie Charles & Emma James. 2005. "‘He earns the bread and butter and I earn the cream’: job insecurity and the male breadwinner family in South Wales", (*Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 19(3): 481–502).

**B) Group discussion:** How does the existence of invisible, unpaid, voluntary work affect our understanding of the labour process?

Erin Hatton. 2017. "Mechanisms of invisibility: rethinking the concept of invisible work." (*Work, employment and society*, Vol. 31(2): 336–351).

Rebecca F.Taylor. 2004. "Extending conceptual boundaries: work, voluntary work and employment." (*Work, employment and society*, Vol. 18(1): 29–49).

Donna Baines. 2006. "Caring for nothing: work organization and unwaged labour in social services." (*Work, employment and society*, Vol.18 (2): 267–295).

#### **WEEK 8: Good Jobs/Bad Jobs and Precarious Employment**

**A) Group discussion:** Is precarious employment growing?

Standing. 2011. *The Precariat*: 13-16 & 26-58. (Available as an E-book at the Library)

Kevin Doogan. 2001. Insecurity and Long-term Employment, (*Work Employment and Society*, Vol. 15: 419-441).



Ralph Fevre. 2007. Employment insecurity and social theory: the power of nightmares, (*Work, employment and society*, Vol. 21 (3): 517-35).

Wayne Lewchuk. 2017. "Precarious jobs: Where are they, and how do they affect well-being?" (*The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, Vol. 28(3): 402–419).

B) Group discussion: What are the challenges in resisting precarious employment?

Coulter. 2014. *Revolutionizing Retail*: 68-123.

Lewchuk, Wayne & Janet Dassinger. 2016. Precarious employment and precarious resistance: “we are people still”. (*Studies in Political Economy*. Vol. 97(2): 143-58).

Wright, Chris F. 2013. The response of unions to the rise of precarious work in Britain. (*The Economic and Labour Relations Review*, 24(3): 279–296.)

## **WEEK 9: Is the end of work upon us?**

A) Group discussion: Does AI mean the end of work as we know it?

Carl Benedikt Frey and Michael A. Osborne. 2016. "The future of employment: How susceptible are jobs to computerisation?" (*Technological Forecasting & Social Change*, Vol. 114: 254-80.)

David H. Autor. 2015. "Why Are There Still So Many Jobs? The History and Future of Workplace Automation". (*Journal of Economic Perspectives*, Vol. 29 (3): 3–30.)

**B) Group discussion:** Does knowledge work mean the end of capitalism?

Ford, *The Rise of the Robots*: 63-128.

David Spencer. 2017. "Work in and beyond the Second Machine Age: the politics of production and digital technologies." (*Work Employment and Society*, Vol. 31(1): 142–152.)

Geoffrey M. Hodgson. 1999. *Economics and Utopia: Why the Learning Economy is Not the End of History*, (London): 179-227. (Available as an E-book at the Library)

## **WEEK 10: Smart machines and a new social contract**

A) **Group discussion:** Are smart machines creating dumb work: Deskilling revisited?

Head, 2014. *Mindless*. pp. 15-77. (Available as an E-book at the Library)

David Graeber. "On the phenomenon of bullshit jobs." Libcom.org.  
<https://libcom.org/library/phenomenon-bullshit-jobs-david-graeber>.

**B) Group discussion:** What might a new social contract look like?

Hatton, 2011. *The Temp Economy*: 143-51.

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Head, 2014. *Mindless*: 185-194. (Available as an E-book at the Library)

Martin Ford, *Rise of the Robots*: 249-84.

## **WEEK 11: Some Alternatives: Flexicurity and Basic Income**

### **A) Group discussion: Is Flexicurity our future?**

Thomas Bredgaard, Flemming Larsen & Per Kongshoj Madsen. 2005. "The Flexible Danish Labour Market- A Review, Policy Dialogue."

[http://www.resqresearch.org/uploaded\\_files/publications/bredgaard4.pdf](http://www.resqresearch.org/uploaded_files/publications/bredgaard4.pdf)

Jason Heyes. 2011. "Flexicurity, employment protection and the jobs crisis." (*Work, employment and society*, Vol. 25(4): 642-57).

Ian Greer. 2016. "Welfare reform, precarity and the re-commodification of labour." (*Work, employment and society*, Vol. 30(1): 162– 173).

### **B) Group discussion: Is basic income our future?**

Evelyn L. Forget. 2011. "The Town with No Poverty: The Health Effects of a Canadian Guaranteed Annual Income Field Experiment." (*Canadian Public Policy*, Vol. 37 (3): 283-305).

Evelyn L. Forget. 2017. Do we still need a basic income guarantee in Canada?, *Northern Policy Institute*, Paper 22. <http://www.northernpolicy.ca/dowestillneedabig>.

John Clarke. 2017. "The Neoliberal Writing on the Wall: Ontario's Basic Income Experiment." (*The Bullet: Socialist Project*, E-Bulletin No. 1438, June 26).

<https://socialistproject.ca/bullet/1438.php#continue>.

## **WEEK 12: The Precariat as a Class**

### **A) Group Discussion: Is it the inferno or is there a politics of paradise?**

Standing. 2011. *The Precariat*: 132-83. (Available as an E-book at the Library)

Ford. *Rise of the Robots*: 193-228.

Christopher Lloyd, & Tony Ramsay. 2017. Resisting neo-liberalism, reclaiming democracy? 21st century organised labour beyond Polanyi and Streeck. (*The Economic and Labour Relations Review*. Vol. 28(1): 129–145.)

### **Fine Print**

**Absence Reporting:** <http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/> On-line self-reporting tool – illness lasting less than 5 days. Can only be used once per term. Instructors are not allowed to accept medical notes! These must be submitted to the Faculty office.

**Academic Ethics:** <http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity/students/index.html>

Academic dishonesty consists of misrepresentation by deception or by other fraudulent means and can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various kinds of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, specifically Appendix 3, located on the website above.

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- Improper collaboration in group work.
- Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

**Code of conduct:** <http://studentaffairs.mcmaster.ca>

“McMaster University is a community dedicated to furthering learning, intellectual inquiry, the dissemination of knowledge and personal and professional development. Membership in this community implies acceptance of the principle of mutual respect for the rights, responsibilities, dignity and well-being of others and a readiness to support an environment conducive to the intellectual and personal growth of all who study work and live within it.”

**Computer use** in the classroom is intended to facilitate learning in that particular lecture or tutorial. At the discretion of the instructor, students using a computer for any other purpose may be required to turn the computer off for the remainder of the lecture or tutorial.

**Course Modifications:** The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes

**E-Mail Communication Policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences:** all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student's own **McMaster University e-mail account**. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor/TA receives a communication from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

**Student Accessibility Services:** <http://sas.mcmaster.ca>  
x28652

MUSC-B107 905-525-9140

*NOTE: Disclosure of disability-related information is personal and confidential.*

Student Accessibility Services offers various supports for students with disabilities. We work with full time and part time students. SAS provides or assists students with their academic and disability-related  
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needs, including: Learning Strategies, Assistive Technologies, Test & Exam Administration, Note-Taking Programs, and Classroom Accommodations.

\*Please inform the instructor if there are disability needs that are not being met.

**McMaster University Policy on Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities & McMaster University Anti-Discrimination Policy**

- <http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf>

**Student Success Centre: GH-110 905-525-9140 x24254**

Provides the following services: student orientation, academic skills, leadership, service-learning, volunteerism, educational planning, employment and career transition.

**Student Wellness Centre: <http://wellness.mcmaster.ca/>  
x27700**

**MUSC-B101 905-525-9140**

Provides services in: Personal and Psychological Counseling, Mental Health Support, Medical and Health Services